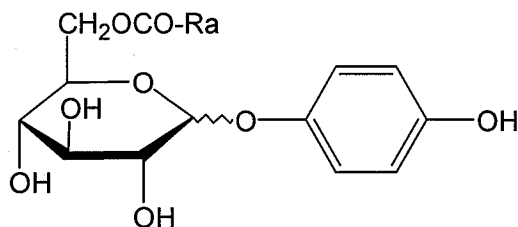


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. **(Currently amended)** An arbutin ester compound represented by formula (1):

Formula (1)



wherein Ra is selected from the group consisting of: a hydrophobic group

R₁-CH=CH₂, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group;

R₁C(CH₃)=CH₂, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

R₁-COOCH=CH₂, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

R₁-COOH, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

R₁-COO-R₂, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

and R₂ is an alkyl group or an aryl group;

R₁-[R₃-CH=CH-R₄]_X-R₅-CH₃, wherein R₁, R₃, R₄ and R₅ are each independently a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and X represents a number of repeating units and is 1 to 6;

R₁-C(CH₃)₃, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

and

R₁-CH₃, wherein R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

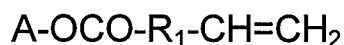
- 2.-10. **(Canceled)**

11. **(Currently amended):** A composition that inhibits tyrosinase ~~tyrosinase inhibitor~~ comprising, as an active ingredient, at least one of the arbutin ester compounds according to claim 1.

12. (Currently amended): An external preparation for the skin, comprising the composition ~~tyrosinase inhibitor~~ according to claim 11.

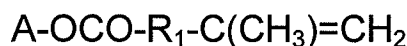
13. (Currently amended): A process for producing an arbutin ester compound, comprising the step of carrying out an esterification reaction of arbutin with a carboxylic acid compound represented by one of formulae (11) to (17) or formula (19):

Formula (11)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkyl group or an arylene group;

Formula (12)



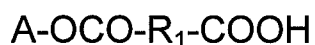
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (13)



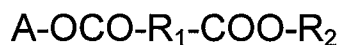
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (14)



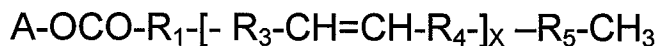
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

Formula (15)



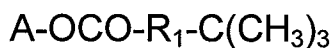
wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; R₁ is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and R₂ is an alkyl group or an aryl group;

Formula (16)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; R_1 , R_3 , R_4 and R_5 are each independently a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group; and X represents a number of repeating units and is 1 to 6;

Formula (17)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;

~~Formula (18)~~



~~wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group;~~

Formula (19)



wherein A is hydrogen or a substituted or unsubstituted alkyl or vinyl group; and R_1 is a single bond, an alkylene group or an arylene group.

14. **(Original)**: The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out in the presence of an enzyme catalyst.

15. **(Original)**: The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out in the presence of a chemical catalyst.

16. **(Original)**: The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification is carried out while performing a dehydration treatment.

17. **(Original)**: The process according to claim 13, wherein the esterification reaction step is followed by the steps of:

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extracting and isolating unreacted carboxylic acid derivative(s) from the esterification reaction mixture with a nonpolar organic solvent; and subsequently,

adding excess water to extract and isolate unreacted arbutin and to precipitate the arbutin ester compound.

18-36. **(Canceled)**

37. **(New)** The composition according to Claim 11, further comprising a suitable carrier.